

REJECTERS OF THE GOSPEL ADMONISHED

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith you may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear."
Isaiah 28:12.*

ASSUREDLY Isaiah was one of the most eloquent of preachers, and yet he could not win the ears and hearts of those to whom he spoke, for it is written, "they would not hear." Beyond all question he was thoroughly evangelical, for, as Dr. Watts truly says, he spoke more of Jesus Christ than all the rest of the prophets and yet the message of love was treated as though it were an idle tale. His doctrine was clear as daylight and yet men would not see it, so that he had to ask with sorrow, "Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?" It was not the fault of the preacher that Israel rejected his warnings—all the fault lay with that disobedient and gainsaying nation.

The people to whom he spoke so earnestly were drunken in a double sense. They were overcome with wine and so general was this vice that Isaiah says, "But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean."

What can be conceived of more potent to blunt the point of Gospel truth than intoxication or excess? When a man is given to wine, how can the Spirit of God dwell in him? How is it likely that the truth shall enter an ear which has been rendered deaf by this degrading vice? How is the Word of God likely to operate upon a conscience that has been drenched and drowned by strong drink? I charge you, if any of you are given to drunkenness, flee from this destroyer before your bands are made strong and you are hopelessly fettered by the habit.

It is small wonder that the preacher is defeated if his ardent zeal has to compete with ardent spirits. When Bacchus rolls the wine cask against the door, it is hard to force an entrance, even though we demand it in the name of King Jesus. Men are in an ill state for hearing when the barrel and the bottle are their idols. It is not at all marvelous that the Gospel should be neglected by men who have put an enemy into their mouths to steal away their brains.

The people to whom Isaiah spoke were also drunken in another sense, namely, intoxicated with pride. Their country was fruitful and its chief city, Samaria, stood on the hilltop, like a diadem of beauty crowning the land—and they delighted in the glorious beauty which is on the head of the fat valley. They themselves were brave and among them were many champions whose strength sufficed to turn the battle to the gate, therefore they hoped to resist every invader and so their hearts were lifted up.

Moreover, they said—"We are an intelligent people. We want no teaching, or if indeed we endure instruction, it must be of a high class. We are men of cultured intellect, instructed scribes, and we do not need persons like Isaiah to weary us with their ding-dong of 'precept upon precept, line upon line,' as if we were mere children at school. Besides, we are good enough. Do we not worship our God under the form of the golden calves of Belial? Do we not respect the sacrifices and the holy days?"

So spoke the more religious of them, while the rest gloried in their shame. Being intoxicated with pride, it was not likely that they would hear the message of the prophet, who bade them turn from their evil ways. Even so, he that is righteous in his own esteem is never likely to accept the righteousness of

Christ. He who boasts that he can see, will never ask to have his eyes opened. He who claims that he was born free and was never in bondage unto any man is not likely to accept the liberty of Christ.

Pride is the devil's dragnet in which he takes more fishes than in any other except procrastination. The destruction of those who are proud is certain—for who can help the man that refuses to be helped, and where is the likelihood that there shall be either repentance for his sin or faith in Christ in the man who does not know that he has sinned, and who believes that if he has done so, he can easily wipe away the stain?

The two forms of drunkenness are equally destructive and I beg to call your attention to this fact. Whether body or soul be intoxicated, mischief will surely come of it. Many are pleased if I speak against drunkenness of the body, and I feel bound to speak as earnestly as I possibly can, for it is a monster evil. But I beseech you who are sober, and perhaps total abstainers, to dread the other intoxication—for if any one of us should be intoxicated with pride on account of our own sobriety, it will be ruinous to our souls. What if we are temperate and self-denying, there is nothing in this whereof to glory—we ought to be greatly ashamed of ourselves if we were not so. Let us not get drunk with pride because we are not drunkards, for if we are so vain and foolish, we shall as certainly perish by pride as we should have done by drink.

I am indeed rejoiced when a man gives up his cups, but I am far happier when at the same time he renounces his self-confidence, for, if not, he may still remain so besotted as to refuse the Gospel and perish by his own willful rejection of mercy. May the Holy Spirit deliver us all from such a sad condition. I confess I feel encouraged this morning by Isaiah's want of success. When he says, "They would not hear," I comfort myself concerning those who pay no heed to my exhortations—perhaps it is no more my fault than it was Isaiah's. At any rate, if Isaiah still went on speaking even when he cried, "Who has believed our report?" much more may I, who am so much inferior to him, be willing to persevere in telling out my Master's message as long as my tongue will move.

Peradventure God may grant repentance to the obstinate, and ears may yet be unstopped and hearts may yet be softened. Therefore, let us try again and once more publish the glad tidings of peace. If the blessed Spirit be with us, we shall not give the Gospel call in vain, but men will fly to Jesus as doves to their windows.

First, I wish to speak this morning upon *the excellence of the Gospel*. Secondly, upon *the objections taken to it*. And thirdly, upon *the divine requital of these objections*.

I. Let us consider THE EXCELLENCE OF THE GOSPEL as it is set forth in the passage before us.

This Scripture does not allude to the Gospel primarily, but to the message which Isaiah had to deliver, which was in part the command of the law and in part the promise of grace. But the same rule holds good of all the words of the Lord and indeed any excellence which was found in the prophet's message is found yet more abundantly in the fuller testimony of the Gospel in Christ Jesus.

Using the passage for ourselves and referring it to the Gospel ministry in this day, the excellence of that Gospel lies, first, in its object. It is excellent in its design, for *it is a revelation of rest*. We, as Christ's ambassadors, are sent to proclaim to you that which shall give you ease, peace, quiet, rest. It is true we have to begin with certain truths that disturb and distress, but our object is to dig out the foundation into which may be laid the stones of restfulness. The message of the Gospel which fell from the mouth of its own author is this—"Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Over Bethlehem the angels sang, "Peace on earth, good will toward men." The object of the Gospel is not to make men anxious, but to calm their anxieties, not to fill them with endless controversy, but to lead them into all truth.

The Gospel gives rest of conscience by the complete forgiveness of sin through the atoning blood of Christ, rest of heart by supplying an object for the affections worthy of their love, and rest of intellect by teaching it certainties which can be accepted without question. Our message does not consist of things guessed at by wit, nor evolved out of man's inner consciousness by study, nor developed by argument

through human reason, but it treats of revealed certainties, absolutely and infallibly true, upon which the understanding may rest itself as thoroughly as a building rests upon a foundation of rock.

The Word of the Lord comes to give believing men rest about the present by telling them that God orders all things for their good. And as for the future, it brightens all coming time and eternity with promises. It rolls away the stone from the door of the sepulcher, annihilates destruction, and reveals resurrection, immortality, and eternal life through Jesus Christ, the Savior. The man who will hear the Gospel message, and receive it into his soul, shall know the peace of God, which passes all understanding, which shall keep his heart and mind by Jesus Christ. The believer of this Gospel shall not make haste by reason of affright. He shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. It is true that after being a believer he may at times be disturbed in mind, yet this shall not be the result of the Gospel, but of that in him which the Gospel promises to remove.

He shall have rest in Christ, even “quietness and assurance forever.” It is written, “for this man shall be the peace.” “Being justified by faith we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” This message, which Isaiah had to deliver, saying, “This is the rest and this is the refreshing,” is the glad tidings which we are taught to deliver in still plainer words, saying to you that in Christ Jesus, in the atoning sacrifice, in the great plan of grace through the Mediator, there is rest for the weary, sweet rest for burdened souls, rest for you if you come and cast yourself at the feet of the blessed Savior. Our authorized message from the Lord God is a revelation of rest. The Lord has promised to obedient minds that they shall dwell in quiet resting places.

More than that, *it is the cause of rest*—“This is the rest wherewith you may *cause* the weary to rest.” The Gospel of our salvation is not only a command to rest, but it brings the gift of rest within itself. Our Lord says, “Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and *I will give you rest*. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and *you shall find rest* unto your souls.” Let the Gospel be admitted into the heart and it will create a profound calm, hushing all the tumult and strife of conscience, removing all apprehensions of divine wrath, stilling all rebellion against the supreme will, and so working in the spirit, by the energy of the Holy Ghost a deep and blessed peace. Oh that we may know and possess this peace of God. The Gospel, then, is a message which speaks of peace and also creates peace. He who sends it is “the Lord and giver of peace” and His effectual power goes with the message where it is faithfully delivered and honestly accepted, creating peace within the secret chambers of the soul.

This rest is especially meant for the weary. “This is the rest wherewith you may *cause* the weary to rest.” If you have been trying to find peace for years and cannot find it, here is the goodly pearl you have been seeking after. If you have been laboring and toiling to keep the law and have failed, here is more than the righteousness that your conscience has been craving. In Jesus crucified you will find all things, for “He is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption!”

Oh you that are weary with the round of worldly pleasure, satiated, nauseated with the vanities and delusions of the carnal mind, come hither and find true joy. O you that are worn with ambition, fretted with disappointment, embittered by the faithlessness of those you trusted in, come and confide in Jesus and be at rest. Weary, weary, weary ones—here is the rest, here is the refreshing. Jesus expressly puts it, “Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

If your backs are breaking, if your hearts are breaking, if your eyes are failing through weary watching and waiting, come to the Savior just as you are, for He will be your rest. Despondent and despairing, condemned, and in your own conscience, cast out to the gates of hell—yet look to Jesus and rest shall be yours. You cannot be too far gone for the Mighty Redeemer. You cannot be too lost for the Savior to find, too black for His blood to cleanse, too dead for the Spirit to quicken. This is the rest with which He makes the weary to rest. Oh, it is a blessed, blessed message that God has sent to the sons of men. How is it that they refuse it?

In addition to bringing us rest, *the message of mercy points us to a refreshing*—“This is the rest wherewith you may *cause* the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing.” If the rested one should grow

weary again, the Good Shepherd will give him refreshing. If he wanders, the Lord will restore him. If he grows faint, He will revive him. Yea, He has begun His gracious work of renewing and He will continue it by renewing the heart from day to day, blending the will with His own, and making the whole man more and more to rejoice in Him.

I know there are some of God's people here who are faint and thirsty. You are specially invited, as well as those who never came before, for if this is the rest for the weary, this also is the refreshing for the fainting, and if the sinner may come and find peace in Christ, much more may you, who though you have wandered from Him like lost sheep, have not forgotten His commandments. Come, you desponding ones, come back to Jesus, for this is the rest and this is the refreshing.

Now note with peculiar joy that Isaiah did not come to these people to talk about rest in dubious terms and say, "There is no doubt a rest to be found somewhere in that goodness of God of which it is reasonable to conjecture." No, he puts his finger right down on the truth and he says, "*This* is the rest, and *this* is the refreshing." Even so we at this day, when we come to you with a message from God, come *with definite teaching*, laying our hand upon the slaughtered Lamb of God, we cry, "This is the rest and this is the refreshing."

We speak of substitution, of Christ's dying in the sinner's stead, of a vicarious sacrifice, of Christ's being numbered with the transgressors, and of our sin laid upon our Surety and borne by Him, and put away from us by Him, so as never to be mentioned against us any more forever. And we proclaim in the name of God that whosoever believes in Christ Jesus has everlasting life—this is the rest and this is the refreshing.

It was said of a certain preacher of the modern school that he taught that our Lord Jesus Christ did something or other which in some way or other was connected with the pardon of sin—this is the preaching of a great number of our intellectual divines. But we have not so learned Christ, neither is this the doctrine by which we have obtained rest to our souls. God has revealed fixed and positive truths, and it is ours to state them clearly and without hesitation. Our cry is, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—this is the rest and this is the refreshing." Something definite, something positive Isaiah had to preach to the people, and yet they would not hear. Perhaps if he had prophesied conjectures and dreams, they would have listened.

Nor did he preach a rest of a selfish character. They say we teach men to get peace and rest for themselves and make themselves comfortable, whatever becomes of others. How these men lie in their throats—they know better and they forge these falsehoods, because their heart is false. Are we not always bidding men look out from themselves and love others even as Christ has loved them? Our words and acts for the good of others prove that we do not delight in selfishness. We abhor the idea that personal safety is the consummation of a religious man's desires, for we believe that the life of grace is the death of selfishness. This is one of the glories of the Gospel, that "this is the rest wherewith you may cause the weary to rest."

Get rest yourself and you will soon cause other weary minds to rest. As soon as you have learned the divine secret, it will become in your hands a blessed charm with which you, too, by God's grace may become givers of rest. With this lamp you may enlighten all that are in the dark, as God shall help you. That secret something which your own heart possesses shall enable you to communicate good cheer to many a weary heart and hope to many a desponding mind. "This is the rest wherewith you shall cause the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing." But this is true of the Gospel and of that only. If you get away from Jesus Christ, and His atonement, and God's great plan of grace, you can cause no rest to others, yea, there is none for yourselves. This, then, is the excellency of the Gospel, that it propounds to men a blessed rest.

The other excellency of the Gospel, of which I shall speak at this time, lies in its *manner*.

First, I count it a great excellency of the Gospel that it *comes with authority*. Read the ninth verse. Even the cavilers acknowledged its authority, for they called the prophet's message, "knowledge" and "doctrine." The Gospel does not pretend to be a speculative scheme or a theory of philosophy which will

suit the nineteenth century, but will be exploded in the twentieth. No, we speak what we do know, not what we dream nor imagine, but what we know.

If, my brethren, the Gospel of Jesus Christ be not a fact, I dare not ask you to believe it, but if it be a fact it is not my “opinion,” not “my views,” as men are always saying—it is the great fact of time and of eternity which is and must be true forever. Christ stood in the stead of men and has become God’s salvation for the sons of men—this is the witness of God. We do not make guesses, we utter knowledge. The word, which is in this place translated “doctrine” is in the Hebrew “message,” and it is the same which is used in the passage, “Who has believed our *report*?” which should better run, “Who has believed our *message*?”

The Gospel comes to men as a message from God and he that speaks it aright does not speak it as a thinker uttering his own thoughts—but he utters what he has learned and acts as God’s tongue—repeating what he finds in God’s Word by the power of God’s Spirit. The Gospel that I have thought out may not be half as good as one which you have thought out, and your cogitation and mine, and all the rest of the produce of thinkers put together, may only be fit to make a fire and a smoke in the garden with the rest of the weeds. But if we receive and accept a message direct from God, then this is its main excellence. I pray you delight in the Gospel because it comes from God to us and tells us unmixed truth with absolute certainty. If we believe it, we shall be saved and he that believes not well deserves the damnation which is pronounced against him. There is no hope nor help for it—this is the inevitable alternative—believe the Gospel and live, refuse it and be destroyed.

Another excellence of the Gospel as to its manner was that *it was delivered with great simplicity*. Isaiah came with it, “Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little.” It is the glory of the Gospel that it is so plain. If it were so mysterious that nobody could understand it but doctors of divinity—I do not know how many there may be here this morning, I do not suppose above a dozen or so—what a sorry case the rest of us would be in. If it were so profound that we must take a degree at a university before we could comprehend it, what a miserable Gospel it would be for mocking the world with. But it is divinely sublime in its simplicity and hence the common people hear it gladly.

As the verse seems to imply, it is fitted for those who are weaned from the breast, those who are little more than babes may yet drink this unadulterated milk of the Word. Many a little child has comprehended the salvation of Jesus Christ sufficiently to rejoice in it, and there are those in heaven not much above two or three years of age, who, ere they went there, bore good witness for Christ to those who loved them and marveled at their words. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings has God ordained strength. Christianity has been called the religion of children and its founder said that none could receive it except as a little child.

I bless God for a simple Gospel, for it suits me, and thousands of others whose minds cannot boast of greatness or genius. It equally suits men of intellect and it is only quarreled with by pretenders. The man who lacks breadth of mind and depth of thought is the man to cavil at the wisdom of God. An affected creature who is little above an idiot will brush his hair backwards, put on his spectacles, wrinkle his brows, and amend the infallible Word, but a man who really has a capacious mind is usually childlike and like Sir Isaac Newton, is glad to sit at Jesus’ feet. Great minds love the simple Gospel of God, for they find rest in it from all the worry and the weariness of questions and of doubts.

It is an excellent thing that the Gospel is *taught us by degrees*. It is not forced home upon men’s minds all at once, but it comes thus, “Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little.” God does not flash the everlasting daylight on weak eyes in one blaze of glory, but there is at first a dim dawn and the soft incoming of a tender light for tender eyes, and so by degrees we see.

The Gospel is repeated—if we do not see it at once, it comes again to us, for it is “precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little.” From morning to morning, from Sunday to Sunday, by book after book, by text after text, by spiritual impression after spiritual impression, the divine gentleness makes us wise unto salvation. This is a grand excellence of the Gospel method.

It is brought down to us and *brought home to us in ways suitable to our capacity*. It is told to us, as it were, with stammering lips (see verse 11), just as mothers teach their little children in a language all their own. I should not like to speak from the pulpit as mothers talk to their babies, yet they use the best language for the baby, the very words for a little child to understand. Even so, in much of the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, we see how God condescends to lay aside His own speech and talk the language of men.

I know not with what language the Father converses with His Son, but to us He speaks after our own fashion. “As the heavens are high above the earth, so are his thoughts above our thoughts,” but He bows to us and tells us His mind in types and ordinances, which are a sort of child language fitted for our capacity. In the Gospel of John, what child language, what depth! What love! If you, my hearer, do not understand the Word of God, it is not because He does not put the word plainly, but because of the blindness of your hearts and the besotted condition of your spirit. Take heed that you are not drunken with the wine of pride, but be willing to learn, for God Himself has not darkened counsel by mysterious words, but He has put His mind before you as plainly as the sun in the heavens. “Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little.”

II. Alas, my time is nearly gone and I need much more space in which to do justice to my subject. I have now, in the second place, to notice THE OBJECTIONS WHICH ARE TAKEN TO THE GOSPEL.

First, let me say that they are most *wanton*. For men to object to the Gospel is a piece of wanton foolishness, because they object to that which promises them rest. Above all the things in the world, this is what our troubled spirits need—rest is our heart’s craving—and the Gospel comes and says, “I will give you rest.” And do men reject that blessing? This is lamentable indeed!

What, were you ill and did you insult the only physician that could cure you? Why were you so foolish? What, were you in debt and did you actually refuse help from a generous friend who would have given you all you wanted? “No,” say you, “we are not so foolish.” But oh, the intense folly, the desperate insanity of men that when the Gospel sets rest before them, they will not hear it, but turn upon their heel. There is no system of doctrine under heaven that can give quiet to the conscience of men, quiet that is worth having, except the Gospel. And there are thousands of us who bear witness that we live in the daily enjoyment of peace through believing in Jesus, and yet our honest report is not believed, nay, they will not hear the truth.

Now, if God came demanding something of you, I could understand your refusing. I have heard of a poor woman who locked her door, and when she heard a rap did not answer it, behaving as though she was not at home. Her minister saw her a day or two after he had called and he said, “I called to see you the other day. I wanted to give you help, for I knew that you were very poor. But no one answered to my knocking.” “Oh,” she said, “I am very sorry, but I thought it was the landlord calling for the rent.” She shut out her benefactor through mistaking him for her creditor. The Lord is not calling in the Gospel for that which is due to Him, nor asking anything of you, but He approaches you with perfect rest in His hand, the very thing you want, and yet you shut the door of your heart against Him. O do not so. Be wise and play not the fool any longer. May God help you to be wise for your own eternal good. Admit your God with all His heavenly gifts.

Next, objections against the Gospel are *willful*, even as it is here said, “This is the refreshing, yet they would not hear.” When men say that they cannot believe the Gospel, ask them whether they will patiently hear it in all its simplicity. No, they say, they do not want to hear it. The Gospel is so difficult to believe, so they say. Will they come and hear it preached in its fullness? Will they read the Gospels for themselves carefully? Oh, no, they cannot take the time. Just so. But a man who does not want to be convinced, must not blame anybody if he remains in error. He that will not hear what the Gospel has to say need not wonder that objections swarm in his mind.

The Gospel asks of men a fair hearing. The Lord says, “Incline your ear and come unto Me; hear and your soul shall live,” for “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” How sad that they will not even hear God’s message of love. It is a willful objection to the Gospel, then, when men refuse

even to hear what the Gospel has to say, or if they hear it with the outward ear, but will not give hearty attention to its truths.

Such objections are *wicked*, because they are rebellion against God, and an insult to His truth and mercy. If this Gospel be of God, I am bound to receive it—I have no right to cavil at it, nor raise questions, philosophical or otherwise. It is mine to say, “Does God say this and that? Then it is true and I yield to it. Does the Lord thus set before me a way of salvation? I will run in it with delight.”

But these people raised objections that were *the outgrowth of their pride*. They objected to the simplicity of Isaiah’s preaching. They said, “Who is he? You should not go to hear him—he talks to us as if we were children. Go hear the learned Rabbi over the way, who is refined and cultured. As for this man, he is not fit to teach any but those who are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts, for with him it is ‘precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little.’ He is so very homely that his sermons may suit for servant girls and old women, and so on, but they are not to be endured by intellectual people. Besides, it is the same thing over and over again. You may go when you like, he is always harping on the same string.”

They say this very savagely, too, for as old Trapp says, “The duller the brains, the sharper the teeth with which to rend the preacher.” Have you not heard folks say in these days concerning a true Gospel preacher that he is always preaching about sovereign grace or the blood of Christ, or crying out, “Believe, believe and you shall be saved”? They sneer and say, “It is the old ditty over and over again.” I am not a Hebrew scholar, but those who are tell us that the passage translated “precept upon precept, line upon line,” was uttered in ridicule, and sounded like a ding dong rhyme with which they mocked Isaiah. You would smile if I read you the Hebrew according to the sound with which, in all probability, it was pronounced.

They said, “This is the way Isaiah preaches—‘I Tzav latzav, tzav latzav; kav lakav, kav lakav: zeeir sham, zeeir sham.’” The words were intended to caricature the preacher, though they do not suggest the idea when translated—“precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line”—they do suggest it readily enough in the Hebrew.

There are people now living who, when the Gospel is plainly and simply preached, exclaim, “We want progressive thought, we want ____”—they do not quite know what they want. They are something like the congregation who, when a certain Bishop of London was preaching to them, were utterly inattentive, whereupon the good man took up his Hebrew Bible and read them five or six verses in the Hebrew tongue, and at once they were all awake. Then he rebuked them by saying, “Verily, I perceive that when I preach you good doctrine you do not care about it, but when I read to you in a tongue which you do not comprehend, straightway you open your ears.”

An affectation of special refinement is supported by listening to talk which is incomprehensible. Too many wish for a map to heaven so mysteriously drawn that they may be excused from following it. Multitudes delight in prayers in the Latin tongue and others prefer them in no tongue at all, but intoned through the nose. Music and millinery, processions and pomposities are preferred by thousands because they prefer sensuous enjoyment to spiritual instruction. We know those who prefer the Gospel shrouded in a mist—they love to see the wisdom of man shut out the wisdom of God. This was the style of objection current in Isaiah’s day and it is fashionable still.

Did I hear someone remark—“Why you, yourself, preach nothing but faith, atonement, free grace, and so on. We want novelties and will go elsewhere for them.”? So you may if you like—I shall not change my note while God preserves me.

III. The third point will be a warning to those who have no relish for the truth of God—let us consider THE DIVINE REQUITAL OF THESE OBJECTORS.

The Lord threatens them, first, with *the loss of that which they despised*. He has sent them a message of rest and they will not have it, and therefore, in the twentieth verse, He warns them that they shall have no rest henceforth, “For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.” All those who willfully reject the Gospel, and take up with

philosophies and speculations, will be rewarded with inward discontent. Ask them, "Have you found rest?" "Oh, no," they say, "we are further off than ever." "But you hoped that if you listened to this philosophical doctrine you would then be happy." They reply, "Oh, no, we are still seeking."

Ask the preachers of that kind of doctrine whether they themselves have found an anchorage and as a rule they will answer, "No, no, we are in pursuit of truth. We are hunting it, but we have not reached it yet." They are never likely to reach it, for they are on the wrong track. The Gospel was made to rest conscience, soul, heart, will, memory, hope, fear, yea, the entire man, but when men laugh at all fixity, how can they be rested? Dear friend, if you have not found rest, you have not yet grasped the entire Gospel and you have need to go back to the fundamental principle of faith in Jesus, for this is the rest and this is the refreshing.

This is the condemnation of the unbeliever, that he shall never find a settlement, but like the wandering Jew shall roam forever. Leave the cross and you have left the hinge of all things and neglected the one sure cornerstone and fixed foundation, and henceforth you shall be as a rolling thing before the whirlwind. "There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked." "The wicked is like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."

Furthermore the Lord threatens them that they shall be punished by *a gradual hardening of heart*. Read the thirteenth verse. They said that Isaiah's message was "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little," and justice answers them, "Even so it shall be to you, a thing despised and ridiculed, so that you will go further away from it; you will fall backward and be broken, and snared and taken."

See verse thirteen. A fall backward is the worst kind of fall. If a man falls forward, he may somewhat save himself and rise again. But if he falls backward, he falls with all his weight and is helpless. Those who stumble at Christ, the sure foundation stone, shall be broken. When opposers hope to retrieve their position, they find themselves snared by their habits, entangled in the net of the great fowler, and taken by the destroyer.

This downward course is followed full often by those who begin caviling at a simple Gospel—they cavil more and more, and become its open enemies to their eternal ruin. If men will not have the Gospel of rest as the Lord has appointed it, He will not alter it to their tastes, but permit it to exercise its inevitable influence upon opposers by its being a savor of death unto death. If they dislike it today, they shall dislike it more tomorrow. If they refuse to feel its energy today, they shall refuse yet more obstinately as time rolls on, and its power shall not go forth to enlighten or impress or comfort their hearts.

This is a terrible thing, and what is still worse, if worse it can be, this is to be followed by *a growing inability to understand*—"For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people." Since they would not hear plain speech, God will make simplicity itself to seem like stammering to them. Men that cannot endure simple language shall at last become unable to understand it.

You know, my brethren, how large a body of mankind are at this day unable to understand the Savior. The Savior said, "This is my body" and straightway they conclude that a piece of bread is transformed into the flesh of Christ. The Savior commands believers to be baptized into His death and straightway they proclaim that the water of baptism regenerates children. They will not understand it, what is clear as the sun. They take our Lord's illustrations literally, and when He speaks literally they dream that He is using metaphor. If men will not understand, they shall not understand. A man may shut his eyes so long that he cannot open them. In India many devotees have held up their arms so long that they can never take them down again. Beware lest an utter imbecility of heart come upon those of you who refuse the Gospel.

If you charge God's Word with being childish, you shall grow childish yourselves, as many great philosophers of our day have done. If you say that it is simple and refuse it because of its plainness, you will become simpletons yourselves. If you say it is beneath you, it will turn out that you will be beneath it, and it will grind you to powder.

Lastly, this warning is given to those who object to the Gospel *that whatever refuge they choose for themselves shall utterly fail them*. Thus says the Lord—“Judgment will I also lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.” Down come the great hailstones, dashing everything to shivers—the threatenings of God’s Word breaking to pieces all the false and flattering hopes of the ungodly. Then comes the active wrath of God like an overwhelming flood to sweep away everything on which the sinner stood, and he, in his obstinate unbelief, is carried away as with a flood into that utter destruction—that everlasting misery, which God has declared shall be the lot of all those who refuse the living Jesus Christ. Beware, you despisers! Beware in time!

I have earnestly tried, at this time, in simple language, to set before you the wickedness of refusing the Gospel of rest. May the Spirit of God grant that any here who have hitherto neglected it may at once accept it. Try it, weary heart. Try it, despondent spirit. Try what faith in Jesus can do. Come and trust in Jesus and see if it does not bring peace to your soul. If Jesus fails you, let me know it, for I will never extol again if He breaks His promises. He can never cast off or cast away a believing heart. Oh, if there be sweet peace, calm, and joyful hope, and gladness, and strength, and life to be had by childlike faith in God’s testimony concerning His dear Son, I pray God that you may obtain it at once.

If you feel an objection to the preacher who now addresses you, pray God that he may preach better. And if you have done so and he is still distasteful to you, go and hear somebody who will not be personally objectionable, for it would be a grief of heart to me to stand in the way of even one anxious heart. I fear that you yourself stand in your own light.

O man, act like a man and hear the Gospel candidly. O self! Will you destroy yourself? O pride! Lower your crest. O drunkenness! Quit your cups. O hardened sinner! God help you to leave your sin. Come and trust Jesus this day. May God enable you to do so by His Holy Spirit, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 28

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—907, 495, 146

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